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FIRST GROUP FROM V CORPS AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL UNIT RETURNS FROM DEPLOYMENT IN IRAQ

By Rabia Nombamba

235th Base Support Battalion Public Affairs Office

ANSBACH, Germany — The first group of about 20 soldiers from B Company, 3rd Battalion, 58th Aviation of V Corps' 12th Aviation Brigade returned to Katterbach Kaserne here January 14 from deployment in Iraq.

Excitement filled the air as families and friends of the B Company troops waited at the unit's hangar for their Soldiers to arrive and signal the end to a more than 11-month deployment.

Crystal Torres and her 8-month old son were among those who waited anxiously for that moment. The boy sat wide awake in his stroller, about to meet his father, Staff Sgt. Juan Torres-Rivera, for the first time.

At approximately 6:20 a.m., loud cheers filled the air as the Soldiers marched in formation through the hangar doors.



RABIA NOMBAMBA
Sgt. Miguel Madera of Company B, 3rd Battalion, 58th Aviation, hugs his wife and daughter for the first time in 11 months, as the company returns to its home station at Katterbach Kaserne in Ansbach, Germany January 13 following its deployment in support of the second iteration of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The group was the first from the unit, part of V Corps' 12th Aviation Brigade, to return from that deployment.

During a brief ceremony, Lt. Col. John G. Reilly, commander of the 235th Base

Support Battalion, told the crowd he is honored "to be here tonight to reunite the world's best Soldiers with the world's greatest families and communities."

"Your mission in Iraq is complete; your mission at home now begins," Reilly told the troops, who were then dismissed to reunite with their loved ones.

Capt. Brandon L. Russell, commander of B Company, said he is thankful to bring back the battalion's first group safely, but added that he continues praying for the safe return of the remainder of the unit.

Single soldiers were also welcomed home warmly by friends and fellow soldiers who remained at Katterbach.

"It feels unreal," said Spc. Lorraine Cason, as she stood, smiling, with a group of fellow returning soldiers and friends.

During its deployment, the unit, part of V Corps' 12th Aviation Brigade, conducted air traffic control missions for airfields near Tikrit, Iraq.

The soldiers will now complete a mandatory seven-day reintegration training program before going on block leave.

The entire unit is expected to return home soon.

